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CIA/ONE/STAFF MEM/47-61

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

28 August 1961

STAFF MEMORANDUM 47-61: (Internal O/NE Working Paper -- CIA
Distribution Only)

SUBJECT: Free World Reaction to the Berlin Crisis

The Uncommitted Nations

1. To most of the uncommitted states the Berlin question is one of war or peace rather than right or wrong. It is a power conflict between the great nations rather than a moral or legal issue. Many of them are not convinced that the Communist Bloc poses any greater threat to their own interests than does the West. Even those who do recognize the universal danger inherent in Communist aggressiveness and expansionism find it difficult to see any connection between the Soviet threat to Berlin and the maintenance of their own liberty and independence.

2. Many find the USSR's desire to sign a peace treaty and turn its responsibilities in regard to Berlin over to the GDR simple and reasonable -- especially in view of what they consider

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to be a shift in the balance of power between the USSR and the West in the 16 years since the end of World War II. (Most, of course, still agree on the necessity of continued Western access rights to the city). While they seek to maintain their neutralist position by avoiding taking sides with either the Bloc or the West, all the uncommitted nations see their own primary interest as preservation of the peace -- in some cases, at almost any price.

3. The positions taken to date by the press and leaders of the uncommitted nations reflect these fundamental beliefs, and in all likelihood, so will their future actions. Prime Minister Nehru has discussed the legal issues involved in the Berlin crisis in detail, appearing sometimes to favor one side and sometimes the other. However, his basic position is represented by his statement: "All other problems sink into almost insignificance when we face the problem of war and peace in the world -- and that is hanging in the balance today in Central Europe." Virtually identical sentiments have been expressed in Colombo, Jakarta, Bogota, Cairo, Rabat, and Lagos, to name only a selection of world capitals.

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US Friends and Allies in the Emerging Areas

4. Many of the friends and allies of the West in the emerging areas have little more knowledge of or interest in the legal aspects of the Berlin crisis than do the uncommitted states. With a few exceptions, however, (the most notable of which is probably Japan), they tend to assume that they could not stand aside in a world conflict. In general, they approve the West's stand to date as a necessary demonstration of courage and determination and many are heartened by what they see as an assertion of vigorous and confident US leadership. None of them, of course (with the possible exception of Nationalist China), sees anything to be gained from war over Berlin, and consequently most will be eager to assist in negotiations which might lead to a settlement of the present crisis without a surrender by the West. (Argentina, for example, is already seeking ways to bring the Berlin question to the UN in a context favorable to the West.)

Major Allies

5. Our NATO allies, together with Australia and New Zealand, generally understand the issues involved in the Berlin crisis

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and accept the necessity that the West take a strong stand under US leadership. Nevertheless, there is a strong undercurrent of feeling, notably as voiced by the British government and much of its public, that some solution must be found through negotiation even if this involves recognition of the GDR. Although the odds are against any major failure of nerve as the confrontation becomes more intense, there is likely to be increasing pressure from our Western allies for accommodation should Western firmness, instead of exercising a sobering effect on the Soviets, appear to be leading to a military showdown.

The Outlook

6. For the time being the outlook is for an increasingly shrill clamor from the uncommitted nations for an easing of the threat to the peace through negotiations. Strong demands will almost certainly emanate from the Belgrade Conference scheduled to begin on 1 September. Because of its composition and leadership, this conference, insofar as it goes into the substance of the Berlin question, is more likely to favor the Soviet than the Western position. However, the sponsors (India, the UAR, and Yugoslavia) and many of the participants will want

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to avoid developments at the conference which will heighten international tension. They will try to keep official references to Berlin as general and non-controversial as possible; they will probably seek to devise strategy for bringing the matter into the UN and for handling it there.

7. It seems almost inevitable that one way or another the Berlin issue will come into the UN -- the only place where any nation other than the great powers can really hope to influence the outcome of the crisis. Here the uncommitted nations will be seeking a mutually acceptable solution or at least postponement of the climax as presently anticipated. Although the USSR will be called upon to make some concessions, the heaviest pressure will probably be directed against the Western powers as the defenders of the status quo and as the side most susceptible to being talked into modifications of its original position. In this stage, the US will probably have strong support from most of her friends and allies. However, a few, such as Portugal, may display their pique with other aspects of US policy by refusing to take a strong stand.

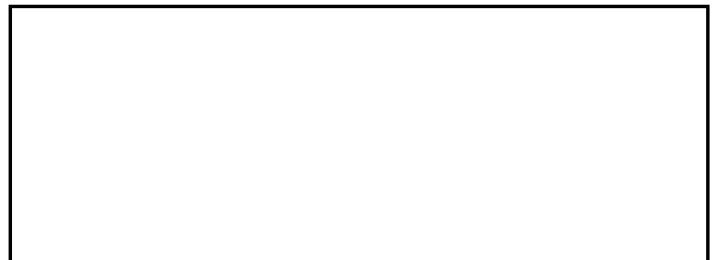
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8. Should no way out of the crisis be found in the UN and a violent confrontation appeared immediate, the neutralists would be likely to scuttle for cover as best they could; a few might openly support the Soviet position because they were convinced both that it is more reasonable and that Soviet power has now developed to the point where the West is likely to come off second best in a showdown. It is possible that a few US friends or allies (e.g. Japan), perhaps as a result of internal crises, might seek to disassociate themselves from the West, denying the use of military bases or facilities. Most, however, we believe, would keep their nerve and somewhat reluctantly take the measures dictated by their various circumstances (e.g. in the case of Britain and France, expansion of military forces and the sending of additional troops to Berlin; in the case of the smaller allies, protection of base rights and cooperation in anti-Soviet measures). All, of course, will continue to hope for and seek ways to promote a last-minute reopening of negotiations.

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